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Is There Sex Bias in Salaries of Psychologists?

Solmon (November 1978) argues that on the basis of an average salary difference between males and females (holding qualifications constant via multiple regression), there is evidence for systematic sex discrimination in the salaries of PhD psychologists. Due to a statistical regression paradox, however, the analyses reported in that article do not demonstrate the presence of bias.

The null hypothesis that there is no discrimination predicts that (a) women will earn less on the average than men of the same qualifications and (b) women will have lower qualifications on the average than men of the same salary. In order for these paradoxical results to occur it is only necessary to assume the following: (a) Women are less qualified than men on the average (i.e., they have fewer years of experience, fewer publications, etc.).

(b) Salary depends only on quality of work, not sex; however, salary is imperfectly correlated with quality of work. (c) Measured qualifications are not perfectly correlated with quality of work. These conditions, which are highly plausible, imply the two conclusions of the null hypothesis. Thus, one should expect women to earn less than men of the same qualifications, even when there is no systematic discrimination.

In order to demonstrate systematic sex discrimination, it must be shown not only that women earn less on the average than men of the same qualifications but also that they are more qualified on the average than men receiving the same salary. This diagnostic test was suggested by Birnbaum (1979), who described several methods for analysis and correction of salary inequities. Birnbaum reanalyzed the data of two multiple regression studies that claimed to show evidence of discrimination against women. In one case women had lower qualifications than men with the same salary. In the other case, women had higher qualifications than men of the same salary. Until the data for women psychologists are properly analyzed, it is premature to conclude that there is evidence of sex bias.

Consider the data in Table 1 for 16 hypothetical employees. For this example, "qualifications" could represent a composite of such variables as years since PhD, publication index, years on job, and other measures of experience and merit. The data were generated assuming no sex discrimination; quality of work was the only determinant of salary besides random error. Note that among persons with a qualifications index of 30 (Cases 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12), males earn more on the average (\$33,333) than females (\$26,667), a mean difference of \$6,666. However, for individuals earning \$30,000 (Cases 3, 4, 8, 9, 13, and 14), men have greater average qualifications than women of the same salary (a difference of 6.66).

Thus we have the paradoxical result that women earn less than men of the same qualifications, and simultaneously, women have fewer qualifications on the average than men earning the same salary! Could the data for PhD psychologists be like those in Table 1?

To answer this question, Solmon generously provides the Higher Education Research Institute data for reanalysis. Table 2 shows the correlations between sex and the five variables that have the highest correlations (.28 or greater) with salary. Since sex was coded with 1 = male and 2 = female, the negative correlations mean that women are lower than men on all five of the background variables that have high correlations with salary. Solmon's (1978, Table 9) analyses show that women are paid less on the average than are men with the same background characteristics. However, the negative partials between sex and the background variables with salary partialled out (see Table 2) show that on the average, women have fewer years since receiving the PhD, are more likely to be part-time employees, have been on the present job fewer years, have published less, and have fewer years of full-time employment than do men with the same salary. The data described

TABLE 1
Hypothetical Qualifications and Salaries

Case	Sex	Qualifications	Salary (\$)
1	F	10	20,000
2	F	20	10,000
3	F	20	30,000
4	F	20	30,000
5	F	30	20,000
6	F	30	20,000
7	F	30	40,000
8	F	40	30,000
9	M	20	30,000
10	M	30	20,000
11	M	30	40,000
12	M	30	40,000
13	M	40	30,000
14	M	40	30,000
15	M	40	50,000
16	M	50	40,000

TABLE 2

Reanalysis of Earnings Data for Psychologists

Background variable (M)	Salary (\$) $r_{M\$}$	Sex ^a (X) r_{MX}	Partial ^b $r_{MX-\$}$	Sex difference ^b (holding salary constant)	Mean	SD
Years since PhD	.344	-.134	-.054	-1.12	12.05	7.66
Employed full time	.334	-.142	-.065	-.04	.95	.22
Years on present job	.309	-.100	-.026	-.46	6.01	6.28
Publication index	.281	-.144	-.081	-8.00	35.38	35.79
Years employed full time	.345	-.136	-.056	-1.26	12.39	8.32

Note. Based on data for 791 PhD psychologists, including 14.9% women, partially described in Solmon (1978, Table 9).

^a Negative correlations indicate that scores on background variables are lower for women. The correlation between salary and sex was $-.246$.

^b Negative partials and sex differences indicate that women are lower on the background variables than are men of the same salary.

by Solmon are therefore like the data of Table 1 and thus provide no evidence that there is systematic sex discrimination in the salaries of PhD psychologists.

Solmon speculated that women may compare the salaries of men and women of the same qualifications, as he did, and may thus be discouraged from entering the field of psychology. The present reanalysis of Solmon's data provides another view of the field: Women psychologists appear to be less qualified than the average man who receives the same salary.

Two comments should be appended. First, even when the evidence is consistent with the null hypothesis of no systematic discrimination, *individual* men and women may still be the victims of irrational prejudice. Second, when the data do allow one to reject the null hypothesis in favor of the alternative that discrimination has occurred, this does not imply that all members of one sex should be treated as a class. One cannot eliminate discrimination by discriminating. In order to eliminate group differences, it is necessary to produce a perfect correlation between salary and an objective index of quality. Birnbaum (1979) has shown how individual and group-related inequities can be corrected without using group membership to determine raises.

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A New Publication Policy

For some time now the field of psychology, like other scientific disciplines, has been experiencing an information explosion, or more precisely, an explosion of printed material. Journals steadily increase in number and specialization. Annually published *Advances* series multiply across the subareas of psychology. Conferences and symposia increasingly result in monographs and books. The proceedings of professional association meetings are published in special volumes. Computer-printed reference materials are commonplace. Self-edited periodicals deal in special brief reports of research. Invitations to contribute chapters summarizing one's previous work abound. Journals that summarize other journals are becoming more frequent. And so on.

In addition to the growth of published material, the past decade has seen a tremendous increase in pressure to publish due to the diminish-

ing number of tenure openings in academia. The "publish or perish" policy has taken on a more literal aspect, and there appears to be no reason to expect any decline in either the pressures on young researchers to publish or the number of outlets for publication.

For some time now I have been a minor participant in the vast publication process as a contributor to printed material, as an editor committed to monitoring the quality of publications, as a researcher struggling to keep abreast of the tide of printed material, and more recently as an academic administrator, one of whose roles is to encourage publication as a mark of professional activity. These several perspectives have increasingly led me to question the merits of our current publication practices and to consider the possible value of a new publication policy. The new policy I have in mind would encourage, or perhaps even require, posthumous publication of one's professional writings. The policy might be called "perish and publish."

At first blush (or perhaps blanch), such a policy surely seems far-fetched, perhaps too silly for even semiserious consideration. But consider for a moment how such a policy might be implemented, and then ponder some of its possible advantages.

Under the policy I envisage, the process of research and publication would proceed *exactly* as at present up to the final stage of submission of the written manuscript for publication. At that point, the investigator would simply place the report on file, either in a personal file or, where there is institutional affiliation, in an appropriate institutional file (e.g., department chairman's file, dean's file). As additional products of scientific activity accumulate (research reports, monographs, books, whatever) these too would be placed on file. This body of work would be continuously available for local institutional purposes, and appointment and tenure